

DRIFT COMPENSATED MAGNETIC PERMEABILITY DETECTORField of the Invention

The present invention relates to a device for use when measuring magnetic permeability (μ) or, alternatively, relative magnetic permeability (μ_r).

5 Background Art

The annual world market for diagnostic equipment based on immunoassays has increased considerably in the last few decades. The main reason for the success of immunoassays is that the method is general and easy to
10 adjust to various chemical analysis problems. By using different types of detection techniques in combination with immunoassays, a number of important chemical substances can be identified and quantified. Depending on the physical measuring principle, different types of
15 detectors are suitable for different types of analysis problems. Since the introduction of immunoassays, a great deal of detectors with excellent performance have been presented. One type of detector uses magnetic permeability as the basis for detection. Such a detector,
20 which is described in SE 9502902-1 and US 6,110,660, allows quick and simple identification of substances using immunoassay technology. The measurements are carried out by placing samples in a measuring coil whose inductance is measured and compared with a separate air-filled reference coil. This type of device allows measuring
25 of magnetic permeability of samples, but it suffers from the drawback that the temperature-dependent drift limits the sensitivity of the detector. The temperature drift is caused by variations in the temperature of the sample and by the fact that the temperature of, respectively, the measuring coil and the reference coil is
30 affected differently by the actual measuring process.

The present invention solves the problem of temperature-dependent drift in a new and efficient manner when measuring magnetic permeability or, alternatively, relative magnetic permeability. Furthermore, it makes it possible to obtain other parameters from the collected measuring data, which parameters are connected to magnetic permeability, for example magnetic susceptibility.

Magnetic immunoassays are based on the principle that a sample is introduced into a sample container, containing one or more magnetic reagents and a liquid, and then the sample container is placed in an instrument for reading the concentration of an analyte. (Kriz et al., Analytical Chemistry 68, p 1966 (1996); Kriz et al., Biosensors & Bioelectronics 13, p 817 (1998); Larsson K. et al., Analysis 27, p 78, 1999).

The above-mentioned documents, SE 9502902-1, US 6,110,660 and Larsson K. et al., Analysis 27, p 78, 1999, disclose prior-art devices and methods, in which use is made of detection of magnetic permeability for quantitative chemical analyses of samples placed in a measuring coil. Said devices and methods do not, however, comprise an integrated double coil, i.e. a measuring coil and a reference coil which simultaneously surround a sample container. Consequently, there is no continuous temperature drift compensation, which means that the temperature of the sample has to be kept constant. It is difficult in practice, and in some cases even impossible, to control the temperature of the sample during the measuring process, in particular when it is placed in the measuring coil during the actual measuring process.

Other prior-art techniques also comprise a flow detector for liquid chromatography based on measurements of Nuclear Magnetic Resonance, NMR (Spraul M. et al., NMR Biomed 7, 295-303, 1994). However, this detector does not measure the magnetic permeability which, unlike NMR, is a macroscopic property originating from the outside of the atomic nucleus in a material. In addition, this device

does not comprise a double coil as in the present invention.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention thus relates to a device,
5 which is characterised in that it contains a sample chamber which is surrounded by at least two coils, which are connected to an electric circuit that measures the difference in inductance between the coils, said device being capable of analysing qualitatively and quantitatively the contents of chemical substances in a sample
10 container placed in said sample chamber or, alternatively, determining the magnetic permeability of a substance placed in the sample container.

The invention also relates to a method in which a
15 device according to the invention is used for detection of various chemical substances in a sample container and which is not limited to immunoassays such as, for example, affinity bindings or synthetic peptide-based bindings selected from phage libraries. Furthermore, the
20 invention relates to a method in which a device according to the invention is used in particular as a blood analysis instrument for clinical use (e.g. for determining blood gases, electrolytes, trace metals, Hb, glucose, protein markers, complement factors, hormones, bacteria,
25 viruses, yeast, cells, fungi, spores, phages, cell organelles, DNA and RNA).

Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a basic diagram showing the principle of the device according to the present invention.

30 Fig. 2 shows an example of an electronic circuit.

Detailed Description of the Invention

According to one aspect of the invention, the device is characterised in that said coils have a self-inductance in the range of 0.01 to 100 μH .

35 According to another aspect, the device is characterised in that said sample chamber has a chamber volume in the range of 0.1 to 5000 μl .

According to a further aspect, the device is characterised in that it contains an electronic circuit according to Fig. 2.

According to yet another aspect, the device is
5 characterised in that it is provided with an electronic circuit whose output signal is proportional to the difference in inductance between said coils and to the relative magnetic permeability (μ_r) of the sample introduced into the sample chamber, which is in the range of
10 $0.0000001 < \mu_r < 5$.

According to another aspect, the device is characterised in that it is provided with an electronic circuit which is formed such that said measuring coil is part of an alternating current bridge.

15 According to another aspect, the device is characterised in that it is provided with two or more double coil systems for simultaneous detection of several samples.

According to another aspect, the device is characterised in that it is provided with more than two coils
20 which surround the sample chamber to carry out measurements at different locations in the same sample or in different sediment layers in the sample container.

According to still another aspect, the device according to the invention is characterised in that it is
25 provided with complementary prior-art physical techniques of measurement for determining light absorbency, light emission, dissolved gas, ion content and electric conductivity.

30 Chemical substances with high magnetic permeability can be identified directly or used as specific reagents in diagnostic applications.

Fig. 1 shows a basic diagram illustrating the underlying principle of the present invention. An opening (a)
35 to the sample chamber makes it possible to introduce a sample container with various chemical substances (a). The sample chamber is surrounded by a reference coil (b)

and a measuring coil (c), the inductance of the coils being affected by the introduced sample. The sample, which is assumed to have a homogenous temperature, affects the two coils equally. A solution, a solid sample or a sediment with an enriched magnetic marker at the bottom of the sample container affects the inductance in the measuring coil (c) of the double coil without affecting the reference coil. A signal is thus obtained whose magnitude has been compensated for temperature variations so that the difference in inductance between the coils can be measured more precisely. The device can advantageously comprise an electronic circuit according to Fig. 2 so as to obtain an electric output signal.

Fig. 2 shows an example of an electronic circuit. The measuring coil (a) with an inductance of 9 μH (0.3 mm copper wire, 30 turns, $D = 8$ mm) is connected in series with a 10 ohm resistor (b). The reference coil (c) with an inductance of 9 μH (0.3 mm copper wire, 30 turns, $D = 8$ mm) is connected in series with a 10 ohm resistor (d). Via the resistors (b) and (d), a 50 ohm trimming potentiometer (e) with 10 turns is connected. Via the coils (a) and (c), a 10 nF capacitor (f) and a 500 ohm trimming potentiometer (g) are connected. The electronic circuit is supplied with alternating voltage (2 V pp, 200 kHz, sinus) through the points (h) and (i). By adjusting the trimming potentiometers (e) and (g), the amplitude and phase of the circuit are balanced. The electric signal generated between the points (j) and (k) are, when introducing chemical substances with high magnetic permeability into the flow-through chamber, proportional to the change in the inductance of the measuring coil, which in turn is proportional to the concentration of said chemical substances.

The device according to the invention can advantageously be used for detection, on the one hand, of chemical substances with high magnetic permeability and, on the other hand, of chemical substances with $\mu_r = 1$, for ex-

ample, haemoglobin, complement factors, proteins, hormones, bacteria, cells, viruses, fungi, yeast, spores, phages, cell organelles, DNA, RNA, which require interaction with magnetic markers, which makes the present
5 device unique. Irrespective of purpose, the method can be carried out under conditions with varying sample temperature, which reduces the temperature-caused drift.